

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6861

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SANTIAGO 0701

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS FROM POPPER

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CI

SUBJ: CURRENT CHILEAN PERCEPTION OF THE U.S.

REF: STATE 10605

1. SUMMARY: THE CHILEAN POLICY-MAKING ELITE IS CONFINED TO A NARROW GROUP OF HIGH-RANKING MILITARY OFFICERS AND A SMALL COTERIE OF CIVILIAN ADVISERS WHO VIEW THE WORLD THROUGH THE SIMPLISTIC OPTIC OF THE UNRECONSTRUCTED COLD WARRIOR. THEY ARE PUZZLED AND HURT THAT THE WEST HAS NOT RECEIVED THEM AS HEROES FOR SAVING CHILE FROM "INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM"; THEY DO NOT COMPREHEND THE SUBTLETIES OF DETENTE; THEY ARE CONFUSED BY THE FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE IN THE US AND THE EMERGING NEW DIRECTIONS IN OUR GLOBAL POLICY; AND THEY FEAR THAT THE WEST-- PARTICULARLY THE US--IS LOSING THE WILL AND CAPACITY TO RESIST MARXISM. CURRENT CHILEAN LEADERSHIP IS REQUIRED BY IDEOLOGICAL CONSISTENCY AND ITS ISOLATION FROM OTHER WORLD POWER CENTERS TO DEPEND UPON WHAT IT REGARDS AS A FOUNDERING US. END SUMMARY.

2. THE EMBASSY HAS REPORTED AT LENGTH ON THE TRAUMA CHILE HAS LIVED THROUGH IN RECENT YEARS AND THE UNUSUAL RELATIONSHIP THE CURRENT CHILEAN GOVERNMENT HAS HAD WITH THE

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US. OUR 75 SANTIAGO 2941 ANALYZED THE CHILEAN REACTION TO

EVENTS IN VIETNAM. AS MILITARY MEN THE JUNTA COULD ACCEPT THE ARGUMENT THAT US WAS OVER-EXTENDED BY INVOLVEMENT IN AN ASIAN LAND WAR, I.E., IN VIETNAM; THAT A BLUE-WATER DEFENSE LIVE IN THE PACIFIC MAKES SENSE; AND THAT DEALING WITH CHINA PUTS USSR ON DEFENSIVE. HOWEVER, INTERNAL US DEVELOPMENTS AS WELL AS THOSE IN ANGOLA HAVE ONLY CONFIRMED CHILEAN DOUBTS ABOUT THE US THAT BECAME CLEAR WITH VIETNAM.

3. ATTITUDES IN CHILE VARY, SINCE THE COUNTRY REMAINS DEEPLY DIVIDED. PERHAPS AS MUCH AS A THIRD OF THE POPULATION IS STILL COMMITTED TO ONE OR ANOTHER SOLUTION OF THE LEFT, AND TO THE TRADITIONALLY ANTI-US ATTITUDES ASSOCIATED THEREWITH. BUT THESE OPINIONS ARE SUBMERGED, AND ARE REFLECTED ONLY IN THE OCCASIONAL ILLEGAL NEWS SHEETS OF THE COMMUNISTS OR EXTREMIST MIR. THEY DO NOT INFLUENCE GOC POLICY.

4. EXCEPT FOR A SEMI-FASCIST OR DISDAINFULLY ARISTOCRATIC FRINGE ON THE FAR RIGHT, MOST OF THE REMAINING CHILEANS ARE INCLINED TO RESPECT AND GENERALLY TO ADMIRE THE US. THEY WOULD LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN TO BE EMBRACED BY US. THEY ARE A DECIDED MAJORITY IN THE COUNTRY, BUT MANY ARE QUIESCENT. THE ACTIVISTS MAY BE DIVIDED INTO THREE CATEGORIES: FIRST, THE MILITARY LEADERS AND THEIR LIKE-MINDED CIVILIAN SUPPORTERS; SECOND, THE TECHNOCRATS IN BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS, WHO GENERALLY HAVE A MORE SOPHISTICATED UNDERSTANDING OF THE US; AND FINALLY, THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION. THE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE US OF THE FIRST TWO CATEGORIES AFFECT GOC POLICIES WITHIN THE RESTRAINTS IMPOSED BY EXTERNAL REALITIES; THE ATTITUDES OF THE THIRD GROUP ARE NOW LARGELY IRRELEVANT, HAVING LITTLE INFLUENCE ON POLICY. THIS MAY NOT ALWAYS BE THE CASE.

5. DEEPLY SKEPTICAL OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND DETENTE, THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP TENDS TO BE AMBIVALENT; THEY SEE THE US AS THEIR ONLY HOPE BUT FEAR THE US IS LOSING ITS WILL, BECOMING WEAK, AND IN THE END MAY NOT BE ABLE TO STAND UP TO THE MARXISTS' ONSLAUGHT. THEY WOULD HAVE LIKED TO SEE THE US TOUGHEN UP AFTER VIETNAM, BUT ANGOLA ONLY CONFIRMS THEIR WORST FEARS. NOW SMARTING UNDER THEIR REBUFF BY THE US, THIS GROUP CANNOT BE SURE OF US. THEY WOULD LIKE TO

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FIND ANOTHER ANCHOR, BUT THERE IS NONE.

6. THE SECOND, MORE SOPHISTICATED GROUP (PREDOMINANTLY THE GOVERNMENT ECONOMISTS) KNOWS THE US AND THE WORLD BETTER, HAS A BROADER PERSPECTIVE ON CURRENT US DIFFICULTIES, AND TENDS TO FAVOR A MORE FLEXIBLE LINE OF GOC POLICY--PARTICULARLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS. THESE PEOPLE CONTROL GOC ECONOMIC POLICY AND HAVE HAD LIMITED INFLUENCE IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS AREA, BUT TEND TO

BE EXCLUDED FROM BROADER POLICY MAKING.

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7. THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION IS POWERLESS NOW BUT MAY NOT BE SO ALWAYS. IT IS HETEROGENEOUS, AND ITS ATTITUDES VARY, BUT IN GENERAL THERE IS CONCERN MIXED WITH SYMPATHY. TO THIS GROUP THE US APPEARS TO BE IN A DETERIORATING POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE COMMUNIST WORLD AND TO BE INCREASINGLY UNABLE TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEMS OF MODERN SOCIETY. MOST DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS APPLAUD STEPS WHICH SHIFT US POLICY AWAY FROM THE JUNTA AND REGARD EMBASSY SANTIAGO AS A FORCE FOR REASON WITH WHICH THE JUNTA MUST RECKON. ON THE WHOLE, HOWEVER, THIS GROUP WOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE US ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE DROPPED. IT IS SOLICITOUS OF THE ECONOMIC WELFARE OF THE LOWER AND MIDDLE INCOME GROUPS.

8. THE FOLLOWING ARE THE COUNTRY TEAM'S MORE SPECIFIC THOUGHTS ON THE QUESTIONS IN PARA TWO, REFTEL. THE ANSWERS IN GENERAL REFLECT THE POSITION OF THE DOMINANT CHILEANS:

A) US STRENGTHS AND VULNERABILITIES: THE POST-VIETNAM EVENTS RE ANGOLA HAVE CONFIRMED THE CHILEANS' JUDGMENT ON VIETNAM: LOSS OF US WILL, IRRESOLUTION, AND WEAKENING OF POSITION. THEY BELIEVE THE CIA REVELATIONS HAVE DAMAGED THE US AND CHILE, AND HAVE REDUCED US ABILITY TO DEFEND ITS INTERESTS. THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THE US IS DIMINISHED, BUT THEY HAVE NO OTHER PLACE TO GO. DESPITE ALL THIS, THERE IS STILL A HEALTHY RESPECT FOR US POWER.

B) VIETNAM AND THE US COMMITMENT: THE IMMEDIATE REACTION
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TO THE VIETNAM DENOUEMENT WAS ONE OF DISMAY. THAT IS NOW PAST. ANGOLA ADDED TO VIETNAM, HOWEVER, THE JUDGMENT HERE IS THAT THE US COULD NOT BE DEPENDENT UPON TO RESIST ANY COMMUNIST-LED MILITARY ACTION IN THE THIRD WORLD. CHILE WOULD ALWAYS ACCEPT US HELP AND WOULD TURN TO THE US IN CASE OF TROUBLE, BUT CHILEANS SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT IN CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES THE US WOULD DO ANYTHING, FOR EXAMPLE, IN CASE OF PERUVIAN ATTACK.

C) ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS: THE SOPHISTICATES UNDERSTAND BETTER, BUT IN GENERAL EXECUTIVE-CONGRESSIONAL DIFFERENCES ARE SEEN AS PARALYZING THE USG AND ERODING ITS AUTHORITY ACROSS THE BOARD.

\$) US POLITICAL PROCESS: THE SOPHISTICATED UNDERSTAND THE US SYSTEM FAIRLY WELL, MOST POLICY-MAKERS IMPERFECTLY, AND PRESIDENT PINOCHET HARDLY AT ALL. THEY TEND TO SEE IN THE US POLITICAL SYSTEM THE SEEDS OF THE SAME IMPERFECTIONS THAT LED TO CHILE'S CURRENT DIFFICULTIES. THEY DOUBT THAT THE USG CARES MUCH ABOUT LA.

E) CHANGE IN TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD US: ALREADY DISCUSSED. AMERICANS ARE STILL RECEIVED WITH OPEN ARMS THROUGHOUT CHILE, BUT THERE IS A CHILL TOWARD US IN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES, BASED ON THE BELIEF THAT US HAS ABANDONED CHILE UNJUSTLY AND CONTRARY TO THE US' OWN INTERESTS. THE IMPACT ON CHILEAN FOREIGN POLICY SO FAR HAS BEEN MARGINAL.

F) CUBA AND ANGOLA: THE CHILEANS NOW SAY, "I TOLD YOU SO." THEY THINK ANGOLA PROVES THE VALIDITY OF THEIR VIEWS ON CUBA.

G) COLLECTIVE OR BILATERAL DEALING: CHILEANS WOULD LOVE A SOLID, SPECIAL BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US, BUT KNOW THEY CANNOT HAVE IT. THEIR ATTITUDE THEREFORE VARIES WITH THE INTEREST INVOLVED; THEY DEAL ON A COLLECTIVE OR BILATERAL BASIS AS PRAGMATISM SUGGESTS. THEY VALUE THE COLLECTIVE GUARANTEE OF THE RIO TREATY AND BASICALLY DO NOT LIKE THE IDEA OF LA GANGING UP AGAINST THE US: THEY DO NOT WANT THE SAME TREATMENT TURNED AGAINST THEM.

H) CHANGE IN GOC VOTING POSITIONS: SCARCELY CHANGED.
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THE CHILEAN VOTE IN COMMITTEE ON THE UNGA ANTI-ZIONISM
RESOLUTION WAS A RECOGNIZED BLUNDER AND THE GOC QUICKLY
BACKED AWAY. NO ONE WANTS TO BUY THEIR VOTE.

I) TURNING TO ANOTHER NATION: GOC WOULD LIKE TO TURN
ELSEWHERE, BUT SO FAR NO ONE IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO HELP THEM
SERIOUSLY WILL HAVE THEM. ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES FOR US OF A
TURN FROM THE US WOULD BE SMALL, EXCEPT FOR THE BENEFICIARIES
OF EXPROPRIATION SETTLEMENTS. THEIR INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC
PHILOSOPHY IN ANY EVENT TENDS TO COINCIDE WITH OURS.

J) US AND DEVELOPING NATIONS: NOT AN ISSUE IN CHILE,
WHICH SEES ITSELF IN AN INTERMEDIATE CATEGORY. THE ECONOMIC
POLICY-MAKERS ARE AWARE OF AND SYMPATHETIC TO US EFFORTS IN THE
DEVELOPING WORLD.
POPPER

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